

**Wednesday, June 20, 2001**

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## **Opening Plenary Session**

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***Gary Uhl, Moderator***  
***Centers for Disease Control and Prevention***

Gary Uhl welcomed the participants to the final day of the meeting. He explained that the plenary session would include an open forum for health departments to react to the Health Department Guidance.

He then described an ongoing project being conducted in the Program Evaluation Research Branch at CDC. This project is an assessment of the evaluation capacity of health departments funded for HIV prevention, with St. Louis University as a contractor and various other collaborators involved as well. The project has three main purposes which are to:

- ☐ Get a better understanding of what health departments are doing related to program evaluation;
- ☐ Collect models of successful approaches that health departments have used to evaluate their HIV prevention programs; and
- ☐ Make recommendations to CDC from health departments that reflect what they need to conduct program evaluation better.

Gary Uhl indicated that an expert panel, comprised of representatives of health departments and specialists in program evaluation and capacity-building from across the country convened in Atlanta to inform the program on the appropriate research questions and data-analytic methodology. CDC chose the case study approach for the project because it is highly exploratory and flexible. That approach will also highlight the different contexts of how health departments conduct evaluation in their jurisdictions. Six health departments have been invited to participate in the project. Site selection was based on a variety of factors, including HIV/AIDS disease burden and racial and ethnic and cultural diversity.

Data collection will begin in Atlanta with a review of all existing documents from these six sites all over the country. On-site visits will include structured interviews with health department

evaluators, AIDS program directors, and other health department program staff. Because of their methodology, case studies will help highlight the strengths and challenges of each health department individually and in an aggregate sense. The information gathered will help CDC learn what health departments need to conduct program evaluation better. Specific recommendations in the report will include:

- ☐ Health departments' descriptions of needed financial and other resources for evaluation capacity;
- ☐ What health departments need regarding training and technical assistance needs; and
- ☐ Technology needs.

The report is expected to be completed in early winter 2002, and it will be shared widely with health departments across the country and to the division at CDC. The program evaluation assessment will include broad activities, not just those included in the Evaluation Guidance.